

Bush, George

CIA 3.03 USSR

26 JAN 1977

GRY1 SALT

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

★ Bush doubtful on SALT talks with Soviets

Asserting that there are "worrisome signs" of a Soviet arms buildup, George Bush told a group of reporters Tuesday over breakfast that he was "not optimistic" about the achieving of a SALT II agreement in the near future.

"There are signs," he said, "that the Soviets are doing more than [playing] catch-up."

Mr. Bush, who recently resigned as CIA chief, said that despite the reports that he has read of Soviet "eagerness" to get an arms-limitation agreement with the U.S., "I am not optimistic."

"I am not at all certain that Brezhnev is eager," he said.

He added it would be good for President Carter to get together with Brezhnev. "It is good to probe," he said.

"But," he continued: "I would like to see more evidence before I thought it was their objective — to ease tensions. I never have seen signs to make me relax."

Mr. Bush had been much more cautious in his assessment of Soviet capabilities and intentions in a TV interview with reporters shortly before he left office. These were, in fact, the most forthcoming public comments he had made on the subject.

Continuing on his thesis that questioned Soviet intent to make the arms-limitation concessions the U.S. would have to have before agreeing to a pact, Mr. Bush said:

"There is nothing in this President that would suggest he would enter into any agreement that wasn't in the best interest of our country."

Here, again, Mr. Bush stressed his lack of optimism about the outcome of a Carter-Brezhnev summit.

Of the "worrisome signs" about the Soviets, Mr. Bush cited the following:

- "The increased percentage of their gross national produce [that] they are putting into their military posture.
- "The evidence of their willingness to sacrifice" in order to put more money into the military.

"This [their military buildup] means," he said, "there is a greater burden on their economy than we thought."

Mr. Bush had this to say on other subjects:

- While not ready to indicate whether he will seek the Republican nomination for president in 1980, he is "very interested" in the prospect.
- He had been opposed "as a matter of principle" to agreeing that he would not later run for the vice-presidency — a congressional-imposed prerequisite to his CIA-directorship confirmation that President Ford, himself, finally agreed to.

"I never changed my position on this," he said.

- He says he sees no change in the relationship between Moscow and Peking since the advent of the new leadership in China. "After initial attempts by the Soviets to move to lessening of the tension," he said, "it does not now seem to be moving in that direction."

"Indeed, of what we see from the speeches and toasts [of the Peking leaders], there is some evidence that there is nothing

different in the relationship resulting from the change in Chinese leadership," Mr. Bush added.

Monitor correspondent David K. Willis reports from Moscow:

The Kremlin has been putting out signal after signal that it considers this period particularly opportune for nailing down a new limitation on strategic arms with the United States.

Western analysts here say that Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev could well view these early Carter days as one of the last opportunities to try and limit the nuclear arms race before the pressure from hawks on both sides to resume the race becomes too strong.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry's press chief, Vsevolod Sofinsky, summoned the entire American press corps to a briefing Jan. 24 and told the newsmen that not enough attention had been paid in the American media to Mr. Brezhnev's definition of detente given in his Jan. 18 Tula speech: "The overcoming of the cold war ... transition to normal, stable relations among states ..."